

Review: Mini could become Apple's most popular iPad

November 16 2012, by Jim Rossman



Prediction: In 12 months, the iPad Mini will become Apple's best-selling iPad.

Apple sold 3 million iPads in the first few days of the [iPad](#) Mini era, but it didn't break out the sales by model.

The Mini was the iPad that [Steve Jobs](#) said Apple would never build.

It was October 2010 when Jobs said, "The reason we wouldn't make a 7-inch tablet isn't because we don't want to hit a price point; it's because we don't think you can make a great tablet with a 7-inch screen."

But then smaller and cheaper tablets like the Kindle Fire, Nook Color and [Nexus 7](#) proved there is a market, so Apple has swooped in to dominate.

Well, to be fair, the iPad Mini isn't a 7-inch tablet - it's a 7.9-inch tablet whose screen has the same aspect ratio as its larger siblings.

But to keep prices low - the Mini starts at \$329- Apple chose to include a few not-so-current components.

Apple went back two generations to its A5 processor for the Mini instead of using the A6 found in the new iPad or the A5X in the previous-generation iPad.

Apple also took a step back in including a screen that isn't a Retina display.

From the standpoint of processor and screen, the iPad Mini has more in common with the iPad 2.

And strangely enough, after the introduction of the iPad Mini and fourth-generation iPad, Apple decided to keep the iPad 2 around as the low-cost big iPad instead of the third-generation iPad.

I guess those Retina displays are really costly.

The iPad Mini isn't just a scaled-down iPad; it's built differently.

At 7.2 mm thick, it's the same thickness as a pencil and 23 percent thinner than the large iPad.

It weighs 0.68 pounds, which is less than half as much as the larger iPads.

Like the [iPhone 5](#) and the newest iPod Touch, the iPad Mini has an aluminum back that matches the bezel coloring.

The black iPad Mini I'm reviewing has a black back, while the white Mini has a silver back. Fair warning: Like the iPhone 5, the black color in the [aluminum](#) is only on the surface, and scratches and nicks will reveal the silver color underneath.

The Mini is narrow enough that most people can hold it in one hand.

I took the Mini around the office, and most people could use it comfortably with one hand, but I did find a few with small hands who couldn't make the reach with their fingers.

It's certainly a two-hander for kids, but someone I know mentioned that her two kids like to watch a movie on the iPad together and that a Mini might be too small for sharing a game or movie. It seems to be more of a device for one.

The front camera for FaceTime shoots in 720p HD, and the rear camera has a 5-megapixel sensor and shoots 1080p video with an F/2.4 lens.

Earlier iPad users will find the same buttons and switches on the Mini, but the sync port is now Apple's Lightning connector.

Apple says the battery is good for 10 hours of use.

One of my biggest complaints about the Mini is that Apple included the 5-watt iPhone USB charger and not the new 12-watt charger that ships with the full-size iPad.

The 12-watt plug charges iPads (and iPhones) much faster, and it costs the same as the slower one if you buy it at the Apple store.

Apple's shrewdest move was to give the newest iPad and iPad Mini screens the same aspect ratio so that all the apps for the big iPads scale and work flawlessly on the smaller iPad.

When the iPhone 5 came out with its longer screen, all the app developers had to scramble to release new versions that took advantage of the extra screen real estate. If they don't, users will see black bars on the [iPhone](#)'s display.

There's none of that with the iPad. All the old programs run full screen and use every pixel.

Storage and 4G LTE configurations are the same for both new iPads, only the pricing is different.

For the Mini, pricing is \$329, \$429 and \$529 for 16, 32 and 64 gigabytes, respectively.

Add an extra \$129 for LTE from the carrier of your choice among the big three.

Wi-Fi models have been available since the start of the month, while 4G LTE models are shipping in mid-November.

So after the dust settles, which iPad do you choose - the Mini or one of the full-size iPads?

After spending a week with the Mini, I'm pretty sure I'm going with the smaller iPad. The new body style feels really solid. It fits well in my hand, and I can slip it in the back pocket of my Levi's.

The Mini's size will surely make it easy to toss in a purse or school bag.

I have a third-generation iPad, and it just seems really large and heavy now that I've been spending my nights with the Mini.

I don't miss the Retina display, but I'm not a big iBook reader, either. I do think that the Mini will gain some admirers from the Kindle crowd.

I think ultimately I'll carry the Mini more than I carry my iPad. Being able to slip it in my pocket when I'm walking is perfect. Of course, it comes out when I have to sit down.

So when it comes time to make a decision, you'll have to determine if smaller screen size, non-Retina display and lighter weight are better than a faster processor and a larger, better-looking screen.

If you're buying a tablet for Mom for Christmas, I'd look at the Mini before I'd look at the larger models unless the larger screens are needed for older eyes.

I have to admit I reach for my glasses when I'm using the Mini, but as long as my eyes can handle it, the Mini will do just fine for me.

IPAD MINI:

-Pros: Small size, very well built, runs all iPad apps.

-Cons: Screen resolution, older processor, slow USB charger included.

-Bottom line: I'm betting the iPad Mini is the best choice for the majority of iPad buyers who are thinking about price and convenience.

-Price: \$329-\$659

-On the Web: apple.com

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